



Youth Opportunities Program

Annual Report



Missouri Department of Economic Development

YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAM
REPORT TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FOR 2014

The Youth Opportunities Program (YOP) is authorized to allocate up to \$6 million in tax credits per calendar year for projects that target Missouri's at-risk youth. Through the 2014 application cycle, YOP allocated a total of \$5,499,343 in tax credits to 31 youth projects throughout the state. Contributions to these projects will fund programming for 28 youth service projects and the construction or renovation of three facilities. A 2014 project list is enclosed.

Approved 2014 projects have the potential to generate more than \$10.9 million in contributions, leveraging nearly \$5.5 million in private sector dollars. Since its inception in 1997, YOP has raised \$142,621,471 in contributions for projects focused on serving Missouri's at-risk youth.

YOP primarily partners with non-profits that work in their communities to develop and implement projects and services for at-risk youth. Non-profits team up with the Youth Opportunities Program to leverage private dollars to fund projects that meet this goal. These programs help youth overcome their current circumstances and realize their potential as productive citizens. YOP is an incentive for non-profits to provide specialized programming for disadvantaged youth who would otherwise not have such opportunities.

The Youth Opportunities Program has established program outcomes as a means to measure and verify the impact the program is having throughout the state. Priority is given to projects with outcomes impacting one or more of the following five areas:

- 1. Increase the number of at-risk youth that receive a high school diploma.**
- 2. Increase the number of at-risk youth that receive a high school equivalency.**
- 3. Increase the number of at-risk youth that remain in school, improve grades, and /or earn course credit(s) toward a diploma.**
- 4. Reduce the number of at-risk youth committing crimes and violent acts.**
- 5. Increase the number of at-risk youth that have completed an employment skills education and development program.**

Table 1.1 (next page) shows the amount of tax credits authorized, issued, and redeemed to date from each of the last three calendar year allocations. Taxpayers (donors) have the tax year in which they made a contribution, plus five succeeding tax years to redeem their tax credits.

| Table 1.1: Tax Credit Utilization | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 |
| Credits Authorized To Date¹ | \$5,909,974 | \$5,799,936 | \$5,499,353 |
| Credits Issued To Date² | \$5,195,404 | \$3,585,636 | \$1,219,994 |
| Credits Redeemed To Date³ | \$4,000,437 | \$1,978,335 | \$103 |

¹ Credits Authorized = Total Amount Authorized each calendar year minus recaptured, as of 12/31/2014.

² Credits Issued = Total Credits issued as of 12/31/2014 for the projects authorized in each calendar year.

³ Credits Redeemed = Total Credits that have been redeemed by contributing taxpayers as of 12/31/2014 for contributions made to projects authorized in each year.

YOP projects that ended and were closed from 2012-2014 have reported the following results under each of the program outcomes (Table 1.2). The outcome numbers are the totals to date for the projects that ended in each year. The totals fluctuate from year to year due to varying project time frames, the types of projects funded each year, and the number of projects closed each year. Some numbers may include duplicated youth if the youth participate in the program more than one year or if they achieved more than one outcome.

| Table 1.2: Outcomes Achieved | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 |
| # of Jobs Retained and New | 0 | 20 | 67 |
| # Earning High School Diploma or GED | 75 | 78 | 44 |
| # Earning School Credits and/or Improving Academically/GPA | 10,396 | 6,639 | 23,378 |
| # Not Committing Crimes and/or Completing Violence Prevention Courses | 9,195 | 6,472 | 5,313 |
| # Abstaining from Drug and Alcohol Use and Completing Prevention Programs | 1,576 | 2,310 | 3,000 |
| # Completing Life Skills Training, including Financial Literacy; Participating in Mentoring | 8,667 | 8,186 | 5,711 |
| # Learning Employment Skills and/or Receiving Job Placement | 2,523 | 957 | 1,586 |
| # Increasing Knowledge in Science, Math, Technology, or Business | 439 | 60,228 | 2,071 |
| # Achieving Other Outcomes (Such as counseling, crisis intervention, improved social skills, etc.) | 18,170 | 5,584 | 10,279 |

As shown by the outcome data above, numerous organizations, using YOP as a tool, are successfully implementing projects to help at-risk youth become more productive adults.

Gene Slay's Boys Club of St. Louis (GSBC) and Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Ozarks (BBBSO) are two such organizations. These organizations are successfully using YOP tax credits to cultivate new donor relationships, increase reach and capacity, and contribute in a very real way to meet the needs of disadvantaged youth. The following summaries demonstrate the ways in which these agencies are making positive, lasting differences to improve the lives of Missouri's most at-risk children.

Gene Slay's Boys' Club of St. Louis

Who They Are – Launched in 1929 by Father Charles Maxwell, the Boys' Club of St. Louis was initially created to be a recreation center and safe haven for neighborhood boys. Through various moves and a name change to honor past President and Club Alumnus Eugene Slay, the Club has evolved over the years to meet changing community needs and demographics. Today, GSBC provides high quality and holistic after-school and summer programs that address the needs of at-risk boys and girls living in South St. Louis through academics, leadership building, healthy lifestyles, athletics, and the arts.



Who They Serve - GSBC primarily serves boys but has recently undertaken an expansion to extend services to underserved girls. The boys and girls served by the Club are some of Missouri's most at-risk youth, with 93% of members defined as low to moderate income (with 51% defined as extremely low-income), 75% living in female-headed, single parent homes, and 91% minority. In addition, many GSBC members live in neighborhoods, like LaSalle Park, Dutchtown, and Gravois Park, where they are especially vulnerable to violence and gang involvement. Their environments and circumstances put these youth at a higher risk for dropping out of school, teen pregnancy, delinquency, drug and alcohol use, and physical abuse.

What They Do - Youth enrolled in programs included as part of GSBC's YOP project are served through summer and after school programs that focus on reading, literacy and math activities; homework enrichment activities; job readiness and employment programming; financial literacy; character development, healthy living, and athletics. Programs are designed around the Club's Six Pillars of Character (Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring, & Citizenship) and equip youth to make good choices, break the cycle of poverty, and improve their circumstances as productive members of the community.

The Club employs experienced and Missouri-certified teachers as learning and literacy specialists to provide individualized support and academic instruction to youth. In addition, GSBC provides transportation to make programs accessible and never turns a child away because of inability to pay. The Club also provides an evening meal/snack to members in the after-school program and breakfast and lunch to members in the summer program.

Through their current two year YOP project, GSBC will accomplish the following outcomes:

- 100% of members enrolled in Job Readiness Classes and Financial Literacy Classes will demonstrate proficiency.
- 210 of 300 members participating in the Summer Program will sustain or improve math and reading skills.
- 59 of 65 at-risk members participating in Blueprint for Reading Success and/or My Reading Coach will improve their reading level by one full grade level.
- 85 of 105 at-risk members participating in Character Counts Clubs will demonstrate improvements and proficiency in the areas of respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, fairness, caring, and citizenship.



Darius' Story

Darius had every reason not to succeed. Darius' birth family provided him with next to no structure or positive support. As a kid, Darius' parents were trapped in an endless cycle of drug addiction and crime. Darius had to be taken from his family's home and was adopted and raised by family friends.

His adoptive parents' biological son was already coming to GSBC when they took him in, and Darius joined the Club when he was eight. GSBC provided Darius the structure and guidance he needed to overcome his troubled past and grow into a responsible young man. GSBC's Teen Job Readiness Program's financial incentive of working greatly appealed to him. Darius worked at GSBC throughout high school.

With the guidance and continued support of GSBC, Darius is now excelling in college on a basketball scholarship. Darius is working toward a degree and career in engineering. He returns to work at GSBC each summer to support the next generation of youth while ensuring that he is in an environment that supports his dreams.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Ozarks

Who They Are - For over a century, Big Brothers Big Sisters has been helping change kids' perspectives and giving them the opportunity to reach their potential. As the nation's largest donor and volunteer supported mentoring network, the Big Brothers Big Sisters movement makes meaningful, monitored matches between adult volunteers ("Bigs") and children ("Littles"), ages 6 through 18, in communities across the country.

In 1983 the movement made its way to Springfield with the establishment of Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Ozarks as an affiliate. In the first year, BBBSO served less than a dozen children through a one room office. Since that time the organization has seen impressive growth. In 2000 a satellite office in Branson was added to serve Stone and Taney County children, and in 2009 BBBSO merged with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Jasper and Newton Counties. These expansions bring the total counties in the BBBSO service area to 20, while serving approximately 800 children annually through its mentoring programs.

Who They Serve - Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Ozarks targets children who are in need, including those living in single parent homes, growing up in poverty, and coping with parental incarceration. Among other risk factors common to the children currently being served by BBBSO, 87% qualify for the school's free and reduced lunch program, 69% of families have a household income of less than \$20,000, and 31% of the



children served have an incarcerated parent. These factors mean that BBBSO youth are more likely to: have delays in academic achievement, become involved in juvenile crime and the criminal justice system, and are more likely to experience child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, and crisis involving drug and/or alcohol abuse. BBBSO consistently has a list of youth waiting to be matched. Currently, 50 boys are on a wait list for a Big Brother.

What They Do - Changing the lives of at-risk youth in the BBBSO service area begins with recruiting volunteers. As part of the recruitment process, Bigs are asked to make a one year minimum commitment to the program and must participate in a three-tiered background check, an interview, and an orientation. Before making a match, BBBSO staff evaluates the needs of each Little and assesses the background and interests of both the Big and Little. Once

matched, Bigs and Littles meet on a regular basis each month in community- or site-based mentoring. Through community-based mentoring, Bigs and Littles spend time together and develop a relationship by sharing every day activities and experiences. Through site-based mentoring (conducted in partnership with Springfield Public Schools), Littles who are struggling academically and/or socially spend time with their Big primarily at school. BBBSO program staff organizes quarterly activities for children and volunteers in mentoring relationships (both site- and community- based) that are designed to provide teachable moments to Littles through every day experiences. All matches are provided with ongoing professional guidance and support to make the match a long-lasting, impactful relationship.

In a national study conducted in the early 1990's to determine the impact of Big Brothers Big Sisters, researchers found that after 18 months of spending time with their Bigs, the Little Brothers and Little Sisters (compared to those children not in the program) were: 46% less likely to begin using illegal drugs, 27% less likely to begin using alcohol, and 52% less likely to skip school.

More recently, a 2009 nationwide survey of Bigs and Littles supported the findings of the earlier study and went on to show that, currently:

- 97% of Littles said working hard in school is very important.
- 95% of Littles said going to school and getting a good education is very important.
- 94% of Littles said graduating from college is very important.

Among former Littles:

- 77% reported doing better in school because of their Big.
- 65% agreed their Big helped them reach a higher level of education that they thought possible.
- 52% agreed their Big kept them from dropping out of high school.

Being a Big Brother: BBBSO's Big Brother Sam and Little Brother Ethan

Sam and Ethan are celebrating their three year match anniversary in December 2014. Sam was recently asked a few questions about his match with Ethan. His answers show what it truly means to be a Big Brother:



Q: In what ways have you noticed Ethan change over the past three years?

A: *Ethan has become more confident with me and other people. He's developed a great sense of humor and he's started reading consistently this year.*

Q: How do you feel Ethan has benefited from your match relationship?

A: *The one way I can think of is the consistency of a male figure in his life. And I've told him that I like hanging out with him and that I think he's pretty cool. He knows that I value his opinion and what he has to say, and I'm going to keep coming back for a long time.*

Q: What are some things you've learned through your experience as a Big Brother?

A: *I've learned that it sometimes takes years to understand the value of something. I remember being frustrated during our first year. We had a good time, but much of it was spent trying to have a lot of fun and not feeling like going out to eat once a week was going to matter in the long run. Now I'm a little more relaxed. I've realized it's not my job to fix Ethan or his family, but to walk by his side as long as I can.*

| Organization Name | Authorized Amount |
|---|-------------------|
| Aim High St. Louis | \$249,997.00 |
| Better Family Life, Inc. | \$250,000.00 |
| Big Brothers Big Sisters Of Eastern Missouri | \$250,000.00 |
| Big Brothers Big Sisters Of The Ozarks | \$70,000.00 |
| Boys & Girls Club Of Springfield, Inc. | \$250,000.00 |
| Boys And Girls Clubs Of Greater Kansas City | \$160,031.00 |
| Boys Hope Girls Hope Of St. Louis, Inc. | \$170,840.00 |
| Butterfield Youth Services, Inc. | \$39,596.00 |
| Cardinal Glennon Children's Medical Center | \$250,000.00 |
| Central Missouri Foster Care & Adoption Association | \$38,154.00 |
| Children's Foundation Of Mid-America (Presbyterian Children Services) | \$195,109.00 |
| Easter Seals Midwest Fka Life Skills | \$249,479.00 |
| Epworth Children & Family Services | \$249,857.00 |
| German St. Vincent Orphan Association | \$244,754.00 |
| Girls On The Run Of St. Louis | \$92,328.00 |
| Good Shepherd Children & Family (fka Cath Services For Child & Youth) | \$250,000.00 |
| Guardian Angel Settlement Association | \$25,000.00 |
| Herbert Hoover Boys And Girls Club | \$250,000.00 |
| Kingdom House | \$250,000.00 |
| Lift For Life Gym, Inc. | \$20,310.00 |
| Lutheran Family & Children's Services Of Missouri | \$219,782.00 |
| Ozanam | \$59,331.00 |
| Sherwood Forest Camp, Inc. | \$249,290.00 |
| St. Louis Artworks | \$35,000.00 |
| St. Luke Community Christian Center | \$155,676.00 |
| St. Patrick Center | \$207,290.00 |
| Teach For America | \$250,000.00 |
| The Children's Home Society Of Missouri | \$150,000.00 |
| Urbanfuture | \$209,245.00 |
| Wyman Center, Inc. | \$240,758.00 |
| Youth Empowerment Zone | \$167,526.00 |